

### **AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

### **LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

Claims 1-11 (cancelled).

12. (New) A method for operating an internal combustion engine having a fuel-driven combustion motor, in which fuel is delivered under pressure to the combustion motor via a fuel delivery system, the method comprising:

- determining a pressure decay rate in the fuel delivery system; and
- inferring a fault as a function of a comparison of the pressure decay rate with a predefined threshold value.

13. (New) The method as recited in claim 12, further comprising:

- regulating a pressure of the fuel to a setpoint;
- recognizing a fault and determining the pressure decay rate in the fuel delivery system when an actual pressure value does not reach the setpoint during a predefined time; and
- determining a type of fault as a function of a comparison of the pressure decay rate with the predefined threshold value.

14. (New) The method as recited in claim 13, further comprising:

- initiating an emergency mode action as a function of the type of fault.

15. (New) The method as recited in claim 12, further comprising:

- recognizing a leak in the fuel delivery system in the event an absolute value of the pressure decay rate exceeds the predefined threshold value.

16. (New) The method as recited in claim 15, further comprising:

- shutting off the internal combustion engine when the leak in the fuel delivery system is recognized.

17. (New) The method as recited in claim 16, further comprising:

blocking a restarting of the internal combustion engine is blocked when the leak in the fuel delivery system is recognized.

18. (New) The method as recited in claim 12, further comprising:

recognizing a fault in the fuel supply system when an absolute value of the pressure decay rate falls below the predefined threshold value.

19. (New) The method as recited in claim 18, further comprising:

activating a limitation of a quantity of fuel delivered when the fault in the fuel supply system has been recognized.

20. (New) The method as recited in claim 12, further comprising:

shutting off the internal combustion engine when a fault has been recognized regardless of a type of the fault, when the internal combustion engine is at idle or at low load below a predefined load threshold.

21. (New) The method as recited in claim 12, wherein the determining step includes separating a high-pressure circuit from a low-pressure circuit of the fuel delivery system, and determining the pressure decay rate in the high-pressure circuit.

22. (New) The method as recited in claim 12, further comprising:

transmitting a warning message when the fault is recognized.